

W.W. 2 Sutton UTO 1

CHAMPIONS Wycombe Wanderers moved up to third place in the Rothmans Isthmian League table after Saturday's 2-1 victory over Sutton United at Loakes Park. Once again, although this was not a convincing triumph, the Blues did enough to earn maximum points.

Two goals in two minutes by John Delaney and Tony Horseman (penalty) should have given Wycombe the foundation for a convincing victory but in the end, they were grateful to hear the final whistle.

There were times on Saturday when Wanderers played some excellent attacking football. Three and sometimes four man moves split open Sutton's defence with first time passing but they were unable to maintain the tempo or their supremacy and United fought back well. The visitors were never out of the running and once or twice looked likely to snatch a share of the points. Again, had Wycombe accepted a better quota of the chances, they could have saved themselves a good deal of worry.

Even so, there was plenty for Wanderers to be pleased about. They had an outstanding player in each department — Geoff Anthony up front, Terry Reardon in midfield and Ray Eaton at the back. The pick of them all was Reardon. Marking his former team-mate Larry Pritchard completely out of the game, Terry still found time to spray some marvellous passes through and around the Sutton defence. This was, in my view, one of his best performances ever for Wycombe — and there have been some good ones in the past.

Eaton also had his best 90 minutes in a Wycombe shirt and his constant overlapping and support on the left flank stretched Sutton time and again. Upfront, little Anthony showed some delightful touches and was much more of a threat than in recent matches. His ability to get a cross over under pressure was one of the best parts of his game.

Wanderers were without Mick Holifield who had to go to hospital with a suspected broken toe but returned with the news that it was just bad bruising.

The first half belonged almost exclusively to Wycombe. From the fourth minute (their first chance) they had Sutton under considerable pressure which eventually brought the two goals. That early chance was created by Reardon whose through ball deceived John Rains and went straight to Horseman. I think 'Bodger' was so surprised that Rains did not intercept, that he left his shot a little too late and Rick Collier managed to block the effort with his body.

With John Delaney towering above the Sutton attack, Wycombe had things much their own way and Horseman almost broke the deadlock after 14 minutes with an overhead kick which Collier had to tip over the top. A superb run by left back Cross, when he beat despairing tackles from first Birdseye and then Delaney, carved out a rare Sutton chance but Graham Dennis blazed over the top.

United looked more dangerous towards the end of the half but Delaney gave a warning of what was to come in the second when he headed Alexander's corner powerfully for goal but straight at the keeper.

Derek Harris, who had a quiet game against the dominant Mick Preston, was unlucky to see his 49th minute header strike Sutton's big centre half but within 10 minutes of the second spell, Wycombe were ahead. Within 12 minutes, they were 2-0 up!

The first came from Delaney when he headed Horseman's corner firmly down past Collier. It was his first goal for the club since his return from Bournemouth. Then, barely two minutes later, Anthony was brought down by Rains and Horseman sent Collier the wrong way for his sixth goal of the season, his second in successive games from the penalty spot.

With this two goal advantage, Wanderers really should have had the game well and truly sewn up. They looked all set for the biggest victory of the season but within seven minutes of that second goal, they allowed Sutton to pull back into the game, thanks to a shoddy piece of defensive work. Sutton forced three successive corners and from the third Preston headed on for Dennis to snap up a half chance with Wycombe slow to clear the loose ball.

Although they still looked dangerous going forward, Wycombe fell away badly in the last 20 minutes and were fortunate when Ricky Kidd's drive hammered against the crossbar following a Rains free kick. Sutton seemed to come back in midfield where Dave Alexander struggled to match the outstanding workrate of Reardon.

It was Alex, however, who almost made it 3-1 with the best move of the match in the 83rd minute. Birdseye, who again looked sound at right back, broke through the middle on a run and with an interchange of first time passing, swept the ball through to Alexander with the visitors' defence completely bemused by the speed of the move. Taking his shot first time, Alexander side-footed just over the bar.

After that, Wanderers held the initiative without further incident until the final whistle. Once again, they had the chances to win this game comfortably and sooner or later, someone is likely to suffer when the front men find their best form this season.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell, P. Birdseye, K. Mead, J. Delaney, R. Eaton, H. Kennedy, T. Reardon, D. Alexander, A. Horseman, D. Harris, G. Anthony (sub D. Evans 69 mins).

SUTTON: R. Collier, M. Sorenson, J. Rains, M. Preston, G. Cross, C. Newstead, M. Bailey, L. Pritchard, G. Dennis, R. Kidd, B. Steer. Sub S. MacDonald (not used).

Referee: T. Maber (Ruislip).

Half time: 0-0. **Goalscorers,**

Wycombe — Delaney (55), Horseman pen. (57). **Sutton** — Dennis (64).

Official paying attendance: 1,660.
Approx. total attendance: 1,950.